

isn't like Lexus and Mercedes, where you pay more and you get a better car. This is the opposite. You have a really crummy car and it costs more to run it, it doesn't work, and it is expensive because it is not working well. It is backward. It is interesting that way.

If you bring that forward, this shows a recent graph from the Commonwealth Fund that shows the same thing, overall quality score relative to the U.S. median and costs in total Medicare spending. Here is the average right here for cost and the average for quality, and here you have these States down here in the bad box. They are way out here in costs. They are very expensive States. They are all above average. Some of them here are way above average—25 percent above average, 15 percent above average, 20 percent above average. Look what their quality measure is. They stink. They deliver terrible quality health care. Over here you have a bunch of other States that are way above the quality median and at the same time they are way below the cost average. So the principle from that first graph back in 2000 still holds true, according to the Commonwealth Fund.

With that background, here is another way to describe it. These are the 10 worst States in terms of highest cost per capita, and these are the best 10 States. I know we have a country with 50 States. This is only 20. We leave out the middle 30. These are the worst 10 in terms of cost, and these are the 10 best in terms of cost.

Here is the idea. Why should we be reimbursing above average the States that have a per-capita cost above average, instead of the way we did it on the sequester, by taking a 2-percent cut on everybody across the board that nobody can do anything about—just a cold, wet blanket of funds denial? Why not look and say this is the most that a State would get paid—whatever the cost would be—if it were at the average. The rest, you just take it back per capita across the entire reimbursement for that State.

This is what would happen with these high cost States. The very next meeting of the State medical society, the very next time the State met with the Governor, the very next time the Medicaid program got together, they would be hollering, saying: What on Earth? I do a good job. I am going to get my reimbursement cut because of that?

No, we have to fix this. It would give them a massive incentive to stop behaving like this and start behaving like this. If we built in some lead time so they had the chance to actually get there, they might actually never have to cut. They might not ever have to face that cut because what they would have done in the time leading up to when the cut was scheduled to be imposed is begin to behave like the States that have lower costs than average.

We know this could be done because so many States are already doing it. Why would we ever again look at an

across-the-board Medicare-provider cut when we have an enormous discrepancy between these high-cost, low-quality States and these low-cost, high-quality States—like this one all the way over here? Oh, my gosh, it is a bargain there; it is top quality care.

That is my point for the day. I hope that anybody listening who is looking at the proposed cuts in the budget and who is looking at the need to manage this exploding health care cost curve that America has had for the last 50 years—steepening health care cost curve—starts to think about ways to do not just dumb and bloody cuts, but smart cuts—smart cuts that give the States that are costing us much more money than their peers the incentive to actually start behaving like their peers and bring down the cost for everyone. That is what I would consider to be a serious win-win.

I look forward to continuing this discussion. We have a couple of years before we are going to face this again with any luck, but I think this is an idea that is worth considering.

Once again, if you give the States enough warning within the 10-year budget period so we can score it but with enough warning that they have got the chance to react—I encourage anybody to read Atul Gawande's last article about Texas. He wrote an article about the terrible cost differential between—I think it was El Paso and a town called McAllen, TX—huge. Then they brought in the ObamaCare affordable care organizations—accountable care organization models and down came the price in McAllen.

So it can be done. We have seen it being done.

With that, I yield the floor.

#### RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:03 p.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair and reassembled at 8:32 p.m. when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. SASSE).

#### TRADE ACT OF 2015—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, for many months I have been speaking about what I call the Washington cartel. The Washington cartel consists of career politicians in both parties who get in bed with lobbyists and special interests in Washington and grow and grow and grow government. I believe the Washington cartel is the source of the volcanic frustration Americans face across this country, and it is difficult to find a better illustration of the Washington cartel than the charade we are engaged in this evening. This deal we are here to vote on is both

shockingly bad on the merits and it is also a manifestation of the bipartisan corruption that suffuses Washington, DC.

What are the terms of this budget deal? Well, in short, what the House of Representatives has passed, and what the Senate is expected to pass shortly, is a bill that adds \$85 billion in spending increases—\$85 billion to our national debt, \$85 billion to your children and my children that they are somehow expected to pay. I don't know about your kids, but my girls don't have \$85 billion lying around in their rooms.

This bill is put together in a way only Washington could love. The spending increases, when do they occur? Surprise to nobody, \$37 billion in 2016, \$36 billion in 2017, and \$12 billion in 2018. But we were told, fear not; there are some spending cuts to offset them. And wonderfully, miraculously, ostensibly there are supposed to be a few spending cuts in 2020, then 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. At the very end, 10 years from now—when my daughter Caroline will be getting ready to graduate high school, she is 7 now—we are told \$33 billion will be cut in 2025.

If you believe that I have a bridge to sell you in Brooklyn and I have some beachfront property in Arizona. Nobody in this Chamber believes that. Nobody in the House of Representatives believes that. No member of the press believes that. Everyone understands this is a lie. It is an agreed-to lie by everyone. We will spend now for a promise that 10 years hence we will magically cut spending that will never ever, ever occur.

That is on the face of it, but beyond that it is worth thinking about just how much \$85 billion is. It is more than the Senate negotiated with the House when HARRY REID was majority leader. When HARRY REID was majority leader the Ryan-Murray budget agreement—which was a flawed agreement and an agreement I voted against—increased spending by \$63 billion over 2 years.

So what does it say that a supposedly Republican majority of the Senate negotiates a bigger spending bill than HARRY REID and the Democrats? When HARRY REID and the Democrats were in charge of this body they jacked up spending and our debt \$63 billion. When the Republicans take charge, whoo baby, we can do it better—some \$85 billion.

Not only that, this deal is not content with spending increases. It also takes the debt ceiling and essentially hands President Obama a blank credit card. It says to the President: You can add whatever debt you like for the remainder of your term with no constraint from this body. We are abdicating any and all congressional authority over the debt that is bankrupting our kids and grandkids.

Now the Presiding Officer and I both campaigned telling the citizens of Nebraska and the citizens of Texas that if we were elected we would fight with